

County Executive Ball Announces Public Review of Howard County Forest Conservation Manual

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Thu 10/29/2020 4:20 PM

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Howard County Government News Release

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October 29, 2020

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County Executive Ball Announces Public Review of Howard County Forest Conservation Manual

ELLICOTT CITY, MD – Today, County Executive Calvin Ball announced the launch of a 21-day public comment period on the Howard County Forest Conservation Manual draft. The Forest Conservation Manual implements the Forest Conservation Act, by explaining the nuts and bolts of forest conservation in Howard County. This “how-to” guide describes in detail how forest conservation should be accomplished before, during, and after the development process, so that planners and developers have the same standards to reference, resulting in better communication, time saved, and positive forest conservation outcomes.

“For nearly two decades, our Forest Conservation Act remained unchanged. In recent years the Act’s out of date standards lacked real positive environmental impact,” said Ball. “Green infrastructure can no longer be an afterthought – it must be built into how we plan and grow. We can’t cut down trees in one location and replace them in another. Now, larger residential developments must retain and replace 75% of trees within the project site.”

The manual is being updated to reflect Ball’s recent updates to the Forest Conservation Act, which will ensure County compliance with State law, increase forest retention and replanting, reduce use of fee-in-lieu, and improve safeguards for the environment. More information is available on the County’s updates to the Forest Conservation Act at:

<https://www.howardcountymd.gov/News/ArticleID/1716/News101719c>

The manual will be available for public review and comment through the Department of Planning and Zoning's public comment portal at <https://hocodpz.konveio.com/fcm2020>. Instructions on how to provide comments through the portal are available [here](#).

Howard County's Department of Planning and Zoning will hold a virtual public meeting on Thursday, November 5 at 4:00 p.m., to present an overview of the draft manual, accept public input and answer questions. To register for the meeting and participate, [click here](#). Registration closes at noon (12 pm) on November 5 for those that want to participate. Upon registration, instructions for accessing the virtual meeting will be provided via email. The meeting will also be live streamed at <https://youtu.be/wLBpEzX0bTU>, for those who wish to view the presentation but not participate in the discussion.

A Technical Advisory Committee, comprised of representatives with expertise in landscape architecture, forestry and environmental protection, reviewed the draft manual and recommended revisions to improve and clarify the manual and ensure clear expectations of how the forest conservation process is to be carried out.

A few of the improvements made to the Forest Conservation Manual include:

- Additional instruction on the protection of historic and specimen trees.
- An incentive for management of invasive species within forests slated for retention.
- Additional direction for the protection of critical root zones, tree sheltering, and other best management practices, leading to healthier retained and planted forests.

Additional information is available on the Department's webpage at <https://www.howardcountymd.gov/Departments/Planning-and-Zoning/Conservation-and-Preservation/Environment>. If you have questions about participating in the meeting, please contact Ms. Susan Overstreet with the Department of Planning and Zoning-Resource Conservation at 410-313-4345 or email soverstreet@howardcountymd.gov.

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